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## KOHUT'S 'HEBREW ANTHOLOGY'

*A Hebrew Anthology.* A Collection of Poems and Dramas inspired by the Old Testament and Post Biblical Tradition gathered from Writings of English Poets, from the Elizabethan Period and earlier to the Present Day. Edited by GEORGE ALEXANDER KOHUT, with an Introduction by HUDSON MAXIM, in two volumes. Cincinnati: S. BACHARACH, 1913. pp. xxxiii + 1,399.

Under this title Mr. Kohut has embraced a number of poems and dramatic selections, whose variety and richness will impress those who are familiar with the ground covered, and doubtless amaze those to whom the field is a fallow one. Undertaken with the purpose of showing the influence of the Old Testament and of later Hebrew tradition upon English poets, it admirably fulfils its intention.

The strength and the extent of Hebraic influence, not merely along ethical or religious lines, but upon the intellectual and literary life of the civilized world, are practically just beginning to be recognized. As Professor Baldwin says, 'the crowning glory of the nineteenth century was . . . the rediscovery of the Old Testament'. Especially has this influence been felt in English literature, which more than any other has been determined by it, and to a greater degree than by any other single formative factor. The English heart and mind have been profoundly affected by Hebrew thought and ideals. 'Though the language of the authorized version is English, not Hebrew, none the less', says Dr. J. G. Tucker (*The Foreign Debt of English Literature*), 'the imagery, the similes and metaphors, the fiery turns of exhortation and denunciation, the fervent question and apostrophe, all these and other elements that make up style, are, apart from rhythm,

Hebrew, not English.' It is not a question of style only. The matter as well as the manner of English literature are profoundly indebted to the Bible and to later Hebrew writings and tradition. The deeper-lying and more effective influence of the spirit is no less apparent. It permeates the whole range of English thought and culture. The Hellenic and the Hebraic spirit are not contradictory. They are in reality supplementary to each other. Their judicious admixture would have saved genius from much of its ethical idiosyncrasies and theology much of its narrowness. To a greater extent than any other have the English people made this admixture. Whether consciously or not they achieved an adjustment between culture and religion and found the marriage a congenial one.

The complete number of writers, the offspring of this marriage, who have translated their filial affection into self-conscious expression by the production of poetry, drama, fiction, history, essay, or commentary, dealing with Hebraic topics or themes, will probably never be known. But Mr. Kohut has given us an inkling of how many have done so within the single fields of poetry and the drama. The range of authors covers the millennium of English writing from Cædmon to Kipling. The topics embrace poems and plays on Biblical characters and episodes, poetical renditions of psalms and prayers, on the Apocrypha and post-Biblical tradition, on tales and legends from the Talmud, Midrash, and other sources. There are poems in defence of the Jews, poems of appeal, and poems of tribute. Here and there a discordant note creeps in, as e. g. Kipling's 'Fifth River', but as a whole the Anthology may well afford the Jews a cause for pride, as it does the non-Jew a cause for earnest thought.

It is a curious fact, however, that the Christian mind can rarely dissociate the Jew from the Christ-story. The Jew of the ante-Christian period is a noble figure. He was prophet, harbinger, kinsman, brother of the Saviour. The tone of the literature that deals with the Jew prior to the advent of Jesus is unexceptionable. But the refusal of the Jews of his own generation to accept Jesus, their alleged participation in the tragedy of the

crucifixion, cannot apparently be absolved even in the most generous mind. While it is true that the selections of Part IV, pp. 599–632 inclusive, of Vol. I, are entitled 'For Israel—Poems in Defence of the Jews, Tributes and Elegies', yet whatever of praise or tribute is voiced, is based as a rule on Biblical claims. Holmes's 'At the Pantomime', no doubt well intentioned and kindly meant, is an example. The same thread is woven into many of the selections.

If it be true that the songs of a nation are a reflex of its spirit, the Jew might well hope for some measure of appreciation and recognition for the incalculable richness of the contribution he has added to the treasury of human thought and ideals, as amply evidenced in these two volumes. But the seemingly undiminishing strength of anti-Semitic feeling, in one form or another, whether the brutal physical persecution of Russia and Roumania and other south-eastern European states, or the refined cruelty of the social and political ostracism of western nations, denies the prospect of a realization of this hope in the near future. Doubtless it is the Jew's part to continue to give to the world its most precious inspirations and its most sordid martyrdoms. A perusal of the Anthology will help him to continue the one and endure the other.

Doubtless there is the implication in this that whatever may be the position of the Jew in the modern world, however much he may mingle with its life and its work, and be in turn affected by its spirit, yet, after all is said and done, his real value as a contributing factor of human progress is inseparably connected with his oldest yet most wonderful possession, his Bible and his early literature. There is here a moral for the Jew himself. It is not the smug, materially-successful Jew who appeals to the sentiment or evokes the admiration of the world, but the loyal and faithful descendant and follower of prophet, sage, and psalmist. The 'Book' has been the world's greatest literary as well as moral impulse. The 'people' thereof are a factor in the world's life only so far as they are the 'people of the Book' and identified with it. Should Mr. Kohut's Anthology serve to bring home this fact to the

Jew himself, and bring him to a juster recognition of his own, it will have rendered a far greater service than merely to have opened the eyes of the Christian world to the appreciation which its finer spirits have accorded to the place and purpose of Israel.

The Anthology is well arranged in two volumes of excellent appearance and workmanship. The selections evince wide reading and scholarly research, bringing to light many little-known and unknown poems, as well as embracing those with which the reading public is familiar. The systematic divisions and indexes make the contents easily accessible for reference, as the volumes themselves afford delightful opportunity for occasional or sustained perusal. The work deserves a place in every well-equipped library.

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